officials at major religious institutions were appointed only with State approval and were thereby coopted as spokesmen for the legitimacy of the Amir's modernization policies.

The dynamics of the play between traditional and modern became more apparent during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman's son and successor, Amir Habibullah (1901-1991), who had neither the ruthlessness nor the political skills of his father. As a consequence the religious establishment regained some of its lost influence, although the Amir diligently furthered several aspects of modernization so as to continue to improve the nation's image during the period of the Great Game.

The first truly modern secular school was Habibiya, opened in 1903. It was modelled after Aligarh College in India. In 1904 a school for the children of notables was established which became the military college known as Harbiya headed by a Turkish military officer. The primary school system was expanded in 1915 and textbooks as well as instruction were provided free.

King Amanullah (1919-1929) expanded his father's education services. Eight modern, foreign-language schools, five for boys and three for girls, were active by the end of his reign; some were upgraded to high schools, with French, German and English instruction at the boys schools. Turkish, French, German and Indian female teachers taught science and foreign languages at Masturat, the first school for girls which opened in 1921. By 1929 the total enrolment in formal state-sponsored secular schools for girls numbered 700.

Students, both boys and girls, were mostly, although not entirely, upper elites. Years later, even after education became more widely accessible to the middle class, these early schools remained elitist centres of learning. By 1978 graduates of state-run schools in Kabul dominated top positions in the bureaucracy; most prominent political leaders during the war years, on both the left and the right, were also graduates of this system.

By 1929 several patterns had been set. First, leaders emerged from State secular schools, not from private madrassas. Second, most, if not all, substantive improvements in education was provided by outside assistance. This trend continued throughout, particularly as university faculties were established. The Faculty of Medicine, was founded in 1932 by Turkish doctors and later affiliated with the University of Lyons, France; Law and Political Science, 1938, France; Science, 1942 and Economics, 1957, Germany; Theology, 1951, Egypt; Agriculture, 1956, USA; Education, 1962, USA; Engineering, 1963, USA; the Polytechnic Institute, 1967, USSR. The extensive primary textbook reforms begun in 1965 were carried out under the guidance of the Americans. The first informal education programme introduced in the 1970s was designed under UN auspices, and directed by a female consultant from India.

Third, this period marks the beginning of the bifurcation of education into two parallel systems: traditional religious and modern secular. From this time onward the influence of one over the other intensified according to political developments, and the divide was often racked with tensions.

King Amanullah's zeal for modernizing attempted to touch all aspects of society and struck out against many conservative customary practices. Inflamed, the traditionalists revolted. Unfortunately the one sector the King had neglected was the military. As the tribal momentum escalated, he lacked the power to assert his authority.

In trying to negotiate his way out of the dilemma the King was confronted with numerous conditions, number one among which was the closure of secular schools, particularly those for girls. The 1929 negotiations failed. A Pushtun tribal army advanced from the east while a Tajik leader entered Kabul from the north to rule for nine months until he was defeated in October.

CONSOLIDATION: 1929-1960s

King Amanullah's successor, King Nadir Khan (1929-1933), came to the throne with the support of the tribal forces that helped him conquer Kabul and this resulted in more influence for religious leaders. Many of the previous reforms were either abandoned or curtailed, but one exception was secular education, including schools for girls in separate facilities, which expanded both geographically as well as academically under royal patronage.

But King Nadir found his throne shaky and his coffers empty. To remedy this, private capital was wooed and education was promoted to help secure loyalty to the monarchy and to produce the manpower necessary to increase productivity. While Islam was evoked at every opportunity so as to strengthen national unity, the gradual, cautious promotion of secular education was employed primarily to convince traditionalists that Islam and modernization were compatible.

This policy continued to mold education developments over the next three decades as the sector grew as an adjunct to development. In short, the expanding education system was used primarily to prepare loyal technocrats and bureaucrats needed for an expanding government and promote nationalism.

Statistics in Afghanistan as we all know are always risky, but they are sometimes useful to indicate patterns. The growth of formal government schools appear thus:

1930	13 institutions	1,590 students
1967	2,567 institutions	497,911 students

It was during this time of major growth that compulsory primary education was constitutionally enshrined, first in Article 20 of the 1931 Constitution, and again in Article 34 of the 1964 Constitution which stated that education is a right of every Afghan, that education shall be provided free by the State, that the State is obliged to provide suitable facilities, and that it is a State duty to guide and supervise. This article also permitted Afghan nationals to establish technical and literacy schools outside the State system, the curricula of which, however, were still to be determined according to State laws.

The government never had the funds or the capability to realize this ideal, but the concept of the right of every citizen to enjoy free compulsory education was a matter of pride which is deeply ingrained in the minds of educated Afghans today who are loathe to see this right compromised.

THE EXPLOSION: 1960s and 1970s

By the time the 1964 Constitution was promulgated, the government, feeling securely backed by a strong military base of power, had already launched an unprecedented surge in development and reforms, including support for the voluntary end of purdah and removal of the veil. Teaching became an acceptable career for women active in public life. Primary schools and Kabul University became co-educational, while middle and high schools remained separate facilities. As the industrial sector grew, rural-urban migration increased, giving many more children access to schooling on all levels. In addition, foreign investors in the new industrial sector sent more and more students, both men and women, overseas for higher training. By 1974 some 1,500 a year were leaving for studies abroad.

Of course, traditional mosque schools continued to function in uncounted numbers, with all the shortcomings described still intact. These were still largely supported by their communities, but in keeping with its consistent desire to retain a tight grip on all things educational, the central government introduced regulatory measures toward the end of the 1960s to standardize and coordinate the activities of those madrassas established through local initiatives. The official rational given for this move was to bring madrassas up to a form parallel with other schools and educational institutions.

By 1978, the number of schools had risen to 3,825 with over a million students taught by almost 40,000 teachers. According to another set of statistics, only 12% of these schools were for girls, but of course many girls attended co-educational schools; others still studied at home where their instruction may well have been superior to that they would have received in schools. The percentages of school-age girls enrolled in primary schools (8.6%), middle schools (3%) and Lycee with grades 10-12 (1.4%), although discouraging, were twice the number in grades 1-9 and five times the number in grades 10-12 compared to the 1960s.

Amir Abdur Rahman would no doubt have been able to find 30 clerks, male or female, to help with his administration by 1978. Nevertheless, in terms of the requirements for truly functional literates, the situation in 1978 was fully as inadequate as it had been in 1880. Indeed, the Amir's search would have been further beset by masses of only marginally employable school graduates. By 1978 unemployment among school graduates was estimated at 70%. Graduates were either ill-trained, overly-trained or, as was often the case, capable only of performing routine administrative jobs which were already filled.

The education sector, therefore, was already inadequate before the onset of war in 1978.

WHAT HAPPENED?

For one hundred years many schools representing very large expenditures of money and effort had come into being, yet Afghanistan's education achievements remained among the lowest in the world. Where were the problems?

On the upper administrative levels, the Ministry of Education had all the departments requisite for a good delivery system, but there was a sad absence of dynamic policy-making leadership. This should not have been, for the ministers and high officials were chosen from among the most capable, forward-looking Afghans available; many held advanced degrees in education from respected foreign academic institutions. But it was difficult to maintain any consistency. Ministers, being political appointees each with their own agendas, were removed with great rapidity before they could affect any lasting impact. Between 1964 and 1973, five different governments came and went.

Worse, ministers often succumbed to a general malaise because they could not persuade the King to issue the necessary authorizations that would enable them to initiate new approaches. The King was dilatory in this regard because he was influenced by overly cautious family advisors who feared that changes toward a more effective, broad-based education system would ultimately undermine the autocratic position of the royal elite. In a way, subsequent events proved they were right - from the monarchy's point of view. In the meantime the system plodded along with many difficulties.

Gaps. I do not intend to dwell here on all the gaps that existed. These you know all too well. Rural-urban gaps and gender gaps are well-spelled out in many papers I have read. The geographic gaps, although often mentioned, could use more constructive attention. The urban class gap between elites and commoners has altered dramatically and will take other forms to be dealt with in the future.

Teaching methods, teachers and reading materials. There is also not much I need to say about teaching methods, for the ills that are all too familiar to you today were as prevalent in the past, despite the existence of several teacher training institutions. Lectures on good techniques did not guarantee good teaching. Rote memorization continued. Classrooms were teacher-centered, not child-centered. Teachers expounded, students listened, rarely bringing up questions or problems, seldom engaging in interactive discussions with other students. This made lessons monotonous and boring, students passive and inattentive. Many dropped out.

Much classroom time was spent in dictation and note-taking as supplies of dependable textbooks were limited. Lessons were focussed on facts, not ideas. Supplementary teaching aids and reading materials providing more entertaining lessons were all but non-existent. And, even when they were available, few cared to take advantage of them. Students preferred to follow prescribed texts tenaciously, objecting to the intrusion of other materials. Also, it is questionable whether supplementary readings would have been very inspiring since all published material was subject to State-censorship throughout the twentieth century.

One root of the problem lay in the fact that good teachers seldom wished to serve outside the cities. Low salaries, poor living conditions, a paucity of entertainment, and the fear of missing out on rewards such as foreign scholarships were powerful deterrents. And those who did serve in the provinces seldom attempted to identify with the communities in which they were posted. Certainly the concept that teachers can perform leadership roles was seldom realized. Trained teachers most often stood apart. The communities preferred it that way for they regarded teachers as outsiders, as government agents, to be held warily at arms length. Of course, let me emphasize, there were notable exceptions.

I have already noted that foreigners of all sorts and languages were conspicuous on the education scene from the time secular education was introduced, both physically as teachers and advisors and as funders. This foreign presence in the sensitive arena of molding the minds of youth disturbed the traditionalists and conservatives. Just as many of you are a worry to those in certain circles today. This exacerbated tensions throughout the system.

Curriculum. As to the concerns of curriculum, here I should like to make some less brief comments, because failings in this regard were responsible for much of the sterility and stagnation that characterized the entire system by 1978. Worrisomely so, for today I see exactly the same mind-sets among officials, many of whom are hold-overs from pre-war days. They stubbornly resist even considering innovation; change is anathema to them. Having survived the King, Daud, Taraki, Najibullah, Rabbani, and now the Taliban, they know that continued survival depends on keeping the system functioning without rocking any boats. Today, as in the past, these officials are perpetuators, not innovators. This is a big stumbling block.

I hear lots of talk - constantly - attributing present problems to the absence of a unified curriculum. As if unification is the key to progress. Perhaps this is correct. I am not a professional. But what about the content? From personal observations I feel that in the past the largely apathetic attitude toward school attendance, the high drop out rates and the graduation of only semi-functional literates were due in large part to the rigidity of the old curricula.

In the rural areas, the question was: Why waste time going to school when what I learn there is not relevant to my daily life? The village schools with which I was acquainted were attended mostly by children of government officials, shopkeepers, rich farmers and a rare number of genuinely motivated fathers and mothers. Only a few poor farmers sent one child to school to prepare him to make a living outside of farming - most probably in a government office or some industry.

For others, meaningful learning for boys was in the fields or with the flocks with their fathers; for girls, at home with mothers, aunts and grandmothers. For them there was no adolescence, no time of widening horizons outside the family. These children were taught to take on adult responsibilities at very early ages without formal schooling. Policy trend-setters ignored this. Even the highly touted revised textbooks produced during the 1960s and 1970s were oriented toward upper and middle class urban populations.

Having said this, I must then admit that increasingly favourable attitudes toward modern schools were notable as the communication infrastructure improved and rural-urban migration increased during the 1960s. I know the Ministry of Education was pressed with more requests for provincial schools than they could process.

In addition to the problem of relevance, there was also not much understanding that the education system in reality should be composed of interacting components that make education relevant to social expectations as well as requirements. Curricula certainly did not reflect this. This was most evident in urban settings. The study of Islam, for instance, was treated largely as a body of ritual. History was mostly oriented toward creating feelings of nationalism and thus was heavy on panegyrics to the royal family and their antecedents. The glories of Afghanistan's cultural heritage were ignored in preference to Arab history. Western disciplines were accepted uncritically. In sum, the system had no roots in local culture.

Instead, the lessons students were learning served to recommend social behaviour that was not gradually adjusted to traditional forms of society, as it was not attuned to social and economic needs to cope with the complexities of rapid change. It did not provide a bridge between the new and the old, and therefore it was unsuccessful in producing agents for gradual progressive change compatible with societal ideals.

The traditional religious schools also produced graduates who were ill-prepared to respond to fresh interpretations required in modern society. The opportunities of rendering change with continuity with the past went unrecognized. They too had no bridge between the past and the present.

Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of the State, with decision-making powers vested predominately within the royal lineage - a legacy from Amir Abdur Rahman - provided little opportunity for either the trained, growing, stronger middle class or the disgruntled conservatives to experiment with innovative change. Clashes were inevitable. Kabul University became a centre of activist ferment as the overall political atmosphere in the 1970s became feverish.

The euphoria occasioned by experiments in democracy initiated in 1964 dissipated in disillusionment, and an intensified mood of militancy led to an increase in voluble political activity. Leftist groups demanded instant modernization; conservatives issued dire warnings that the society was headed toward moral collapse. Marching demonstrations, including masses of school girls, became a familiar sight snaking through the streets of Kabul from 1965 onwards.

The results of all this is familiar to you all. The patiently built-up favourable trend toward the acceptance of modern schools changed almost overnight after the Soviet invasion. Education in general, and modern education in particular, became anathema as the Russians heavily sovietized the system. The sudden introduction of kindergartens, beautiful as they were, to take only one instance, was looked upon as an unpardonable intrusion. Early education had always been considered the prerogative of the family, not the State.

Fortunately, the hostility toward education has been replaced once again with open demands for schooling from all directions, including groups which once actively resisted secular education in any form. The question now is, how can a modern system, better adapted to the national character and in harmony with Afghan traditions and history be implemented.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Although my assignment was to examine the past as the present is your domain, I should like to end with five brief comments which also raise some questions.

First, I hope it is clear that much of what we are witnessing today is not new, it is a part of continuing social processes which must be clearly understood.

Second, recognizing that during the entire period under discussion stringent State regulation was a dominating feature, I should like to suggest that now is a time of relative freedom. Advantage should be taken of what certainly must be only a hiatus to develop model systems, methods and materials that can serve to convince whatever stable leadership emerges that modern education can provide an acceptable bridge between the old and the new which will lead to individual and national prosperity.

Third, since it has been noted that positive renewed demands for education are emerging among various new segments of the society that were virtually untouched by the former system, before formulating new models one must ask what has created this new desire, what aspirations are being sought? Is it economic, or something deeper? Are individuals perhaps seeking to assuage the indignities of these past years of conflict by acquiring that respect traditionally accorded to the educated?

Fourth, events have brought to the fore a new dominant leadership that is not prominently from the graduates of the former elite education system. These individuals are, nevertheless, graduates of non-Afghan institutions where they have imbibed ideas which are in many ways equally as strange to many Afghans as the modern ideas propounded when secular schools were first introduced.

Yet the ages old respect for learning is still present and none of the new leaders have repudiated the right of all to seek education. Nevertheless, the well-entrenched belief that education powerfully influences the minds of the young and therefore must be carefully monitored is as prevalent as ever. The present conviction that the former system corrupted the entire educational system, and with it many aspects of society, is uppermost in the minds of many today. Fear of outside intervention in the sensitive realm of education is therefore strong.

Fifth, despite this, I for one do not believe that education must be automatically returning to the Dark Ages. Inconsistencies abound. Individual officials change with regularity. One set of authorities approves one set of textbooks that others have rejected. Still others accept, without reservation and without dispute, different textbooks prepared according to the latest in modern

pedagogical standards, while the more fervent demand that all teaching materials other than religious texts be abolished. What is allowed today, may be disallowed tomorrow. These types of confusions indicate that the future is wide open to many possibilities.

That all authorities and their attitudes are not the same seems to be well recognized, but do we really know what attitudes prevail, where? What regulations are being imposed by whom, where? To my knowledge an analysis pulling together everyone's experiences during this confusing period has yet to be attempted. I do not think we know enough about what is really going on, and feel strongly that we should try to find out. Hopefully some of the patterns I have drawn here can serve as a useful context for such a study.

With that I conclude. I look forward now to learning from you how you propose to meet the challenges before you.

DRAFT

EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN - THE CURRENT SITUATION

1. Introduction

Research on education policy reform has demonstrated that crisis and/or change motivated by political factors often precipitate policy reviews. For those working on education programmes it has been apparent for some time that Afghan education has been in a state of crisis. In 1995 the ACBAR Education Sub-Committee developed a framework for education assistance in order to strengthen and extend support to the sector. However, this failed to attract attention or additional funds at the time.

It took a more visible crisis or change, i.e. the Taliban's edict curtailing girls' access to formal education, to jolt the wider aid community into recognising the sorry state the education sector is in, and to realise the disastrous consequences this has for Afghanistan's present and future potential for economic and social development. For example, a recent paper on the "Assistance Strategy for Afghanistan" indicates education as a major gap in the assistance of the last decade. Thus, the ban on girls' education and all the subsequent and widening ripples it has caused, have been the precipitating factors leading to this policy workshop. So we do fit into a pattern after all, even if the circumstances are unique.

Nancy Dupree has placed the developments that we as an aid community are presently grappling with, in a historical context, showing that what we witness today needs to be understood as part of a social process that has its roots in the last century and before. In this presentation I want to provide you with a brief overview of the status of education in Afghanistan today, also highlighting both elements of continuity and of change. In the second part, I will present a brief and initial analysis of the assistance provided to education. Finally, I would like to present some emerging issues and questions, for consideration during the discussions today.

2. The current situation

2.1 Education indicators - Literacy rate

Literacy rates are somewhat doubtful indicators since the definitions of literacy vary. In addition, data in Afghanistan have to be treated with great caution. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument I will offer you some of those that are available. The official literacy rate for men in 1970 was 13 percent, the rate for women 2 percent. In 1990 the official (but widely questioned) rates for the adult population were 44 percent for men, and 14 percent for women. Recent data for 1997 suggest urban literacy rates of 35 percent for men, and 10 percent for women. Corresponding rates for rural men are 26 percent, for rural women 3 percent (CIET, 1997).

What do the data tell us? All point to a persistent gender gap. They also indicate clearly that while there may have been some minimal improvement achieved in the last decades, most adult Afghans, especially women, remain functionally illiterate, and that worldwide Afghanistan remains firmly positioned in the bottom ranks on educational indicators. + Decline in recent years

2.2 Education indicators - Access to formal education

Nancy Dupree has already indicated the rapid expansion of education provision that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. One set of data show that by 1975, there were some 780,000 primary students (14.7% of which were girls), 87,000 secondary students (11.2% girls) and 9,770 university students (of which 12.1% girls). Nearly 5,500 young Afghans were enrolled in teacher training institutions around the country (17.5% girls).

Of the 18,555 first level teachers 16.8 percent were women in 1975, 13.4% of the 8,200 second level teachers, and 6.5% of 982 college teachers, and 5.6% of 737 university teachers.

Recent figures are hard to obtain. A school survey in 28 provinces undertaken in 1993 counted 2,200 primary schools (then including grades 1-8), enrolling over 675,000 children, of which 11.1% were girls (UNO/ESSP 1994). I guesstimated for a UNICEF report that in 1995 there were probably some 1 million children in primary schools around the country. The effect of the Taliban's ban on girls' education certainly has drastically reduced the numbers of girls in school nation-wide, considering that in Kabul alone some 40,000 - 60,000 girls were enrolled.

What do these figures tell us? First of all, in terms of total children enrolled, before the Taliban closed girls' schools, perhaps the situation was in numerical terms roughly that of pre-war levels, testifying I think to efforts of school administrations and teachers to maintain educational provision, even if minimally, of the demand for education, and of the efforts of aid agencies, especially NGOs. That school places for girls have drastically decreased recently is clear. Boys' education in cities has also been affected by the withdrawal of the female teachers from the teaching force, and thus numbers of male students may also have decreased. Tentatively therefore, we can conclude that student numbers, especially for girls, have recently declined.

If we examine participation rates rather than numbers of students in school, a similar pattern emerges:

(Show OH for national trends over time)

<u>Participation in primary education</u>

1978: 37 % boys	8.4 % girls	(MOE)
1980: 24	13	(UNDP)
1993: 27	4	(UNO/ESSP)
1996: 36	8	(CIET)

1996 urban M 35% - F 13%; rural M 29% - F 3.5%

Even if the data are not reliable, they point to a persistent low access for Afghan children, and to a rural/urban gap and a considerable gender gap. The 1996 data show a surprising similarity to the 1978 data. Because of the ban on girls' education, the gender gap is widening. Regional gaps are apparent also.

(show maps for gross enrolment boys and girls 1993)

There are no recent data available for secondary and tertiary education, but the pre-war data combined with developments at primary level suggest that the opportunities will have remained extremely limited, and will have virtually disappeared for girls as a result of the ban on girls education. Tertiary level education is still available in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat (male students only), Mazar-I-Sharif (classes have been segregated since May 1997) and the new university in Bamiyan.

Another way of examining the magnitude of the problem is estimating how many children of primary school age are out of school. Assuming a population of 20 million, and a primary school age population of 22% of the total population (CIET), there are about 4.4 million children of primary school age in Afghanistan. Extrapolation from the 1996 participation rates give a total number of 1.4 million boys out of school, and 2 million girls.

These developments, even if the data are impressionistic, show that the acceleration in education provision of the 1960s and 1970s has come to a halt. There has been a significant decline in the number of school places for girls because of the restrictive policies of the Taliban authorities. Altogether, the overwhelming majority of Afghan children, especially girls, are not in school today.

2.3 Patterns of Education Provision

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Mr. G. Weigel	- Swiss Embassy
Ms. L. Thomas-Greenfield	- U.S. Embassy

There is now probably more diversity in education provision than at any other time. From principally two delivery systems, one traditional religious and the other modern secular, provision has broadened, even if numbers of children in school have perhaps not changed or even declined;

1. *Traditional religious education*: The mosque schools continues to provide basic religious and moral education to many Afghan children. It is probably the only education that is sustainable at community level, however, it is limited in what it offers. Private tuition at home also has remained an accepted form of religious study, especially for girls. Dedicated religious schools or madrassah of various types provide organised religious instruction for boys and young men.

2. *Government schools ("unsupported")*: The remnants of the government education system is befiddled by problems, all of which are well-known. Schools receive virtually no official assistance, except the irregular payment of teachers' salaries, with obvious implications for teacher motivation, attendance, and therefore instructional time. Schools are seriously under-resourced; there is no official provision of textbooks or other basic school materials. Many schools continue to function but minimally.

It can be argued however that the Taliban are bringing about considerable change in the education sector. First there is the exclusion of girls from formal education, at least temporarily according to statements of the authorities. It is well-known that the ban on girls' education has not been consistently applied. However, it would seem that government schools unsupported by NGOs have mostly not survived the edict. Furthermore, schools (maktabs) have been renamed madrasa's, and anecdotal evidence suggests that the numbers of religious teachers in schools is increasing, as is the proportion of religious subjects on syllabi. Is there perhaps a convergence of the traditional and modern education being forged?

3. *Urban private and "community schools"*: These schools are a recent phenomenon, emerging as a result of the ban of girls' education in the major cities, mostly run by female teachers no longer allowed to work in the formal system. Many of these schools ask fees, which as a new phenomenon in Afganistan, as free education has been a cherished right, enshrined in the constitution. While these schools provide an alternative for some urban children, and quality is higher than in the government schools, provision is limited as compared to the number of school places previously available in the formal system, and it mostly excludes poor children.

4. *Externally supported educational programmes:* While external support to or influence in the education sector is not new to Afghanistan, the nature and scope of the current support is probably very different. As Nancy Dupree has indicated, this situation probably denotes a climate of relative freedom, even if aid agencies have to contend with efforts of various authorities to control this assistance, in particular the content of education provided, but also in some cases programme management.

What is the role external assistance is playing:

(a) to some extent external assistance has taken over what is normally considered the role of government, when agencies, mainly NGOs, support schools with teacher incentives, and all the required material inputs. In some cases this concerns government schools, in other cases schools in communities not served with government provision. This support is mainly extended to rural primary schools. Aid agencies thus make a sizeable contribution to maintaining basic education services for Afghan children, supporting over 250,000 children in 1997 (this perhaps equals 25% of primary school children, but only 5-6% of all children of primary school age). NGOs have in many instances been successful in maintaining their programmes for girls in Taliban areas, through processes of negotiation with communities, NGO and authorities.

(b) another contribution is the development of new models. In particular, agencies are experimenting

with community involvement in education, in the realisation that free and broad-based government education was neither possible in the past, nor in the present or future. Programmes also address quality and relevance issues through teacher training, innovative materials and methods, and programmes teaching life skills such as health education or landmine awareness. The radio drama programme of the BBC also has a place here.

(c) a third and major contribution is in school construction.

5. *Refugee education programmes*

Many Afghan children have been educated in the diaspora, in Pakistan and in Iran in particular. Refugee education in Pakistan will be the topic of the next presentation.

In sum, there is a varied pattern of education provision, with many more players involved than ever before. However, the total effort serves only fairly limited number s of children.

3. Some key developments/issues

3.1 Urban education

Urban education has suffered perhaps the most, in part because it was much better served initially. Also, a major recent factor in Taliban areas is the curtailment of girls' education and the ban on female employment outside the health sector. This has deprived urban schools, in Kabul and Heart in particular, of the majority of the teaching force, thus negatively affecting boys' education as well. There is now no more (quality) education available for the urban families that value education, and from which professionals, in particular female professionals, were recruited.

3.2 Teacher attendance and motivation

In many schools, the lack of teacher salary payments, and the lack of support and educational inputs have resulted in sporadic teacher attendance, and very low motivation. This has impact on the effort and time teachers put into actual teaching, and therefore on the quality of education. In some places, for example in Mazar-I-Sharif, there is great public dissatisfaction with the public school system. Teachers in the newly emerged urban home-based schools are often dedicated and motivated. Although accurate data are lacking, there is sufficient evidence suggests that the pre-service preparation of new teachers has virtually come to a halt, which raises concerns about the continuation of even first level basic education.

3.3 Quality and relevance

Classroom level processes have not been systematically studied. However, many observers of Afghan classrooms note a preponderance of learning by rote, and an educational process that aims at the transmission of facts rather than the teaching of core language, math and relevant life skills. It has to be remembered that these teaching methods find their origins in traditional education, and that despite the introduction of 'modern' education, these methods have persisted, as is the case in many other countries in the region. Despite the major efforts of aid agencies in teacher training, it would appear that this has largely remained unchanged, which leads me to think we should perhaps review teacher training inputs.

At no point have teaching materials been available in abundance in Afghan schools, especially in rural schools. The lack of financing and provision of materials by the government has had an equalising effect in the sense that presently the previously more priviliged urban schools lack teaching materials as well. Only the (mostly rural) schools supported by aid agencies receive textbooks and other school supplies and are probably better served than ever before. In most schools however, there are so few teaching materials available, that it is hard to imagine that any meaningful teaching and learning can take place at all. Authorities have also wanted to control in particular the type of textbooks provided, and with the recent ban on pictures of animate objects in some areas, there is restriction on illustrations and teaching aids as well.

3.4 Curriculum

Related to the issue of learning materials is the issue of curriculum. Nancy Dupree already referred to the sterility of the curriculum, and the quest for a unified curriculum, being the aspiration of many, especially educated Afghans, as the panacea to the ailments of the education system.

Education is an intensely political sector, as it is concerned with the socialisation of the young outside the family unit, and the transmission of values. In Afghanistan, because of the recent history of state indoctrination and Sovietization through education (although I do not see much proof that these attempts to indoctrinate have been very successful), the involvement of foreigners in education throughout Afghanistan's history, of which the traditional establishment was wary, and a history of state censorship, there is considerable concern about the content of education and therefore textbook content. However, the emphasis on and concern about the role of education in transmitting values and moulding young minds seems to have overshadowed completely the function of education to transmit knowledge and skills.

I would like to make a few comments.

First of all, in this discourse, curriculum is equated with textbooks. There is thus a concern that Afghan children are taught with a variety of educational materials. I think that the variety can be questioned, although there is no doubt that the content of some textbooks is inflammatory. Most materials however, are depressingly similar; very limited in the content they offer, providing little or no guidance to the teacher, and inviting rote learning. What should therefore more concerning is perhaps first the lack of any kind of educational material in many Afghan classrooms, and secondly the poor quality of what is available, some noteworthy exceptions developed by aid agencies notwithstanding.

I lastly would like to point to the information explosion in the rest of the world, and the access to information even many young children have both in and out of school. Condemning Afghan children to only one standard set of meagre textbooks would appear to be shortsighted. A unified vision of education for Afghan children does not need to imply a sterile uniformity of what is offered.

3.5 Demand

Perhaps most extraordinary is the tremendous and unprecedented demand for education that has evolved during the past decade or so. Many observers have attributed this demand to the refugee experience and the change that Afghan society has undergone as a result of population movement, exposure to other ways of life, access to health and education services, etc. Unfortunately, this demand is currently frustrated, both by the inability of authorities, aid providers and communities to respond to this interest, and recently by the restrictions of the Taliban authorities. This community demand constitutes perhaps the greatest opportunity for expansion of education supply, despite the constraints.

What are expectations of education? A recent BBC survey undertaken in rural and urban sites in Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Nangrahar province reveals overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward education, including female education. Educational preferences tend to reflect past learning experiences, with rural respondents suggesting a more limited choice of subject than urban respondents. Religious education, reading and writing and mathematics dominate the choices. Interesting, and also found for example in rural Pakistan, is the notion that education should provide moral education and guidance. For boys, literature, sciences, health studies, social sciences (civics) and sports were found to be popular subjects. For boys, education was seen to be important in terms of providing a future. For girls, handicrafts, home economics, literature, health studies and science were popular, pointing to preference for preparation for traditional female roles and occupations.

4. Assistance to the education sector

We have tried to put together information on the aid provided to the education sector. We would have liked to be able to present trends, in funding, in terms of type of assistance provided, however, the information to answer all our questions was not readily available. What I am presenting is a beginning of an analysis, based on data that were already available, notably in the various ACBAR data-bases.

4.1 Funding

We would have liked to look at trends, both in terms of inputs into education over time, and in terms of education assistance compared to total aid for Afghanistan, but it has been difficult to compile data. According to ACBAR data, NGO budgets for education (both Afghanistan and Pakistan) amounted to US$ 12 million in 1996. The funding came from various donors, in particular European donors. Considering a total aid budget of approximately US$200 million for Afghanistan, and needs in the sector, the financial share of education seems modest.

In the 1998 UN Appeal requests a total of US$ 6.5 million for education project, or 4% of the total funding requested. Education budgets requested in previous UN Appeals are US$ 911,000 in 1995 and US$ 800,000 in 1994. During 1998 there is thus a much greater request for education funding than in previous years, which seems surprising given the ban on girls' education. However, 2.5 million of the funds requested are for a new BBC radio distance education project, designed in part to overcome the constraints on girls' access.

4.2 Geographical distribution of education projects

Show OH Agencies and Education Projects, 1996

It should be noted that 'project' has been defined differently by different agencies in the particular data-base used; some agencies have listed every school supported as an individual project, hence the surprisingly high numbers of projects. Evenso, it is clear that the majority of education "projects" or activities is carried out in the Eastern Region. Possible explanations are the concentration of aid agencies in general in the eastern region, proximity to Peshawar where many agencies have offices (now and during the 'cross-border' period), and the fact that these provinces are areas of origin of a majority of returning refugees and therefore have received particular attention. Other areas are relatively underserved. It is not yet clear to what extent the ban on girls' education (since September 1996) has impacted on the scope of education support in the eastern region.

4.3 Type of projects and agencies

Show OH Agencies and their activities in Afghanistan, 1996

This overhead gives an impression of the relative emphasis of the support provided to various type of education activities and the agencies involved. Not every possible category could be researched, for example the distinction formal/non-formal was not included in the data-base analysed. This table also does not show the size of projects, evenso, some interesting patterns can be discerned. The most obvious is the large number of agencies that are involved in building construction as compared to any other type of activity. Many of these agencies only implement very small education projects, eg the construction of one or a few schools during 1996. There is obvious capacity in construction, however, it may be questioned whether this is the most optimum use of funding given the needs in education.

Next to construction are the agencies that are involved in primary education, indicating the diverisfication in the supply of basic education. These include the large rural education projects of SCA and ADA. A few agencies provide school supplies to schools, without providing other inputs.

Smaller numbers of agencies are supporting secondary and tertiary education. Quite a number of agencies are involved in teacher training. Various of the Islamic NGOs are supporting madrasas/religious education. There is also capacity in the area of adult literacy and language courses, the main agencies being SC USA, AGBasEd and SCA.

What is not reflected in this table are several innovative programmes such as non-formal programmes for out-of-school children (AG BasEd, SC USA planned for 1998), radio education (BBC/AEP). As argued earlier, one of the contriibutions several agencies make is the development of new approaches. A strategy not reflected either is the involvement of (rural) communities in some of the basic education programmes, through the formation of villlage level education committees with management responibility, cask or in-kind contributions to education, ensuring girls' participation (including in Taliban areas), providing space, etc. It might be interesting to review lessons learned of some of the main programmes with a view of expanding access in rural areas. On the whole, present capacity for innovation appears to be limited to a fairly small number of agencies.

Overall, the impression is of piecemeal and fragmented assistance, with geographic biases. Although many agencies appear to be involved in education, there are few specialised agencies. Capacity for both expansion or innovation is probably limited at present. Numerical coverage is hard to assess, but it appears to be limited, both in terms of present school populations as total school age population. The bulk of assistance would seem to go to rural primary education, with urban education, higher levels and non-formal alternatives for out-of-school children and adolescents more limited or lacking altogether.

5. Issues and questions for discussion

I will now point to a number of elements in the situation that have implications for the choices we make to assist the education sector.

Lack of political will (funding): The education sector, together with other development sectors, is not receiving much official attention, translated in budget allocations. There seems to be an expectation that the aid community should shoulder the costs for the education sector.

Questions in this stuation are whether the aid community should take over what is normally considered the role of government? What is our role and position in a 'failed state'? If the aid community takes over the running costs for formal education (as is already happening to some extent), what does this mean for (long-term) commitments, planning and funding? Is education on any scale possible without this kind of commitment? What are aid priorities?

What should the response be in Taliban areas should there be a reversal of the ban on girls' education? What kind of formal education would the aid commnity be willing to support? Would we want to analyse the content of education before deciding to assist, or would we be bound for 'political' reasons to support the formal education sector?

Lack of national education policies
This creates scope for flexibility on the one hand, but a great vacuum on the other for assistance, as there is no natural focus created by an official policy agenda.

Do we need instead to create an aid policy? Develop a vision for assistance to education? What is our role in setting a policy agenda as outsiders? Currently piecemeal and fragmented assistance. Perhaps not more is possible in the situation? Are there areas where we need policy coherence? If resources for education are scarce, should we analyse how best they may be invested? How would this relate to agency capacities?

Lack of 'government' capacity
The government education system never had extensive outreach in rural areas and certain regions, and the education sector was highly centralised and not very efficient or effective. Capacity has been greatly diminished through the fragmentation of the country, successive braindrains, lack of financing, etc. Further, there has always been distrust towards the state system.

Given this lack of capacity, what is the role of the aid community? Do we emphasize the building of capacity of government authorities? Or, do we invest in alternative models of education, through diversification of education supply, and community involvement? Or diversified strategies? With regard to community education programmes, what are our expectations of communities? What lessons can be learned from programmes in Afghanistan, and other community education programmes in other countries? What are opportunities, what limitations? How do we view issues of sustainability?

Edict restricting girls' participation in formal education
The limitations on girls' access to education constitute a violation of basic human rights. The UN and a number of NGOs have officially suspended support to the formal education sector until girls again allowed to go to school.

What level of policy coherence is needed to ensure that a unified position is taken? In urban areas, agreement on the interpretation of the pricniple of non-discrimination is emerging, especially in the Kabul coordination group; private and community home-based schools for girls and boys can be supported (based on a set of criteria), directly by agencies. Not through the intermediary of local authorities as this would denote acceptance of a dual system; home-based basic education for girls and a formal graded system for boys. Formal boys' schools will not be supported until the system opens up to girls again.

In rural areas, the distinctions are less easy. Home-based schools were already a strategy used to enroll more girls and young children, taking into consideration sensitivities of communities regarding the safety and honour of girls, requirement of segregation, and the lack of official school buildings. In rural areas also, many schools run through cooperation of communities and NGOs, and many schools are therefore not official government schools, or even if they are, they also have an 'agency stamp'. What are conditions for support to rural home-based education for girls? What are conditions for support to NGO boys' schools, official rural government schools for boys?

Control, distrust against foreign influence in education

How do we deal with these issues? How much influence can we have over for example choice of textbooks, other instructional materials, curricula, teacher training? Are we determining what values education should transmit (since no education is value free). Or do we accept official textbooks?

Afghanistan has not benefitted from global developments in education

Many lessons have been learned in international education since the war started in 1978 and especially since the Education for All Conference in 1990. Afghanistan has not been able to benefit from these experiences, except through the work of some technical agencies with international links or headquarters. Also in the refugee education context there have been successful approaches .

Should more effort be made to ensure that there is transfer of experiences and lessons learned to Afghanistan, on the basis of careful analysis of need, priorities, capacities, etc.?

6. End note

Few children in Afghanistan are receiving an organised quality education. Many factors contribute to this situation. Although there are many constraints, that at times seem unsurmountable, there are also opportunities. The most important opportunity is the demand from parents and communities for education for their children, boys and in many cases also for girls. In that sense opportunity has perhaps never been greater, and it could vanquish if not seized now. The restrictions on girls' education have led many of us to analyse how education can be supported in line with human rights principles and define equal access. I hope that we can go further and address the crucial issues of low access and quality at all levels of education, for children and adolescents, and analyse how we can address these issues better as an aid community.

I would like to remind ourselves of the extreme importance of education as a prerequisite for sustainable social and economic development, of which Afghanistan is badly in need, and also of education as a right of children. I hope that out of the heightened attention to education we as concerned individuals and agencies can forge an opportunity not only to identify key issues, but also to address them in practical ways.

Educational Assistance to Afghans - the Refugee Context

Catherine Kennedy

The following is a summary of the main points I will raise on the refugee context. As for Afghanistan, statistics are either not available or are unreliable, so this paper focuses more on **issues** identified by agencies and individuals that work in refugee education in Pakistan.

Background

Currently there are approximately 1.4 million refugees in Iran and 1.2 million in Pakistan. Within Pakistan, there are 950,000 living in NWFP, 156,000 in Baluchistan, 100,000 in Punjab. There are refugees living in most of the major cities also, but statistics are not available as they are not officially registered.

Although Pakistan is not a signatory to Geneva Convention on Refugees, it has been quite tolerant of the refugees, for example in allowing them to participate in the local economy.

UNHCR supports the 'official' refugees based in refugee camps and villages and they focus program activities on adolescents, the vulnerable and children. Their policy on education is aimed at "education towards repatriation" . Through NGO implementing partners, they provide primary education for grade 1- 6.

Approximately 30% of primary school aged children attend school in refugee villages (UNHCR estimate). No statistics are available on support to madrassas. There is some support to secondary education, mostly provided by NGOs in urban areas or in the densely populated camps of NWFP. Afghan children officially have access to the Pakistani system, but in reality their opportunities are few. Whilst some agencies have traditionally provided support to private or 'self-help' schools in cities, this is decreasing drastically in response to a reduction in funding available for refugees, as moneys are increasingly directed towards Afghanistan. In some of these schools education to grade 12 is available for girls as well as boys.

The limited support to tertiary education is mostly in the form of scholarships. In Peshawar there is an Islamic university and a co-educational university which offers a very limited range of subjects, including medicine.

For children age 6 months to 6 years there are a few pre-schools supported by NGOs, offered as work-place nurseries or run as private businesses by women trained in NGO programs. Adult literacy and non-formal education is also offered by a small number of NGOs in the refugee villages. These are aimed mostly at women.

Technical Issues

Several of the issues raised here relate to issues identified by Nancy Dupree in her paper, and referred to also by Ellen van Kalmthout.

Barriers to access: On the supply side, the main barriers to access for education are the shortage in provision, (demand now outstrips supply in most areas) and the lack of flexibility of provision. The formal schools exclude some children e.g. by their long hours, the distance from children's homes, the presence of male teachers.

On the demand side, poverty is a major barrier. Many refugee children have to help families eke out a living, for example as rubbish pickers in urban areas, or have to do household chores to free other family members to seek paid work. A decreasing number of families find school education irrelevant, particularly for girls. Cultural beliefs, such as female seclusion, also restrict enrolment.

Retention (drop outs): Drop out rate is very high in the early grades of primary school. While NGO implementing bodies have had considerable success in addressing this problem, there is still much to be done. The main reasons are the same that inhibit enrolment: the opportunity cost and cultural attitudes. However, many children report that the lack of access to higher levels of education is also a considerable disincentive.

Quality & Relevance: In the refugee context, much work has been done towards improving the quality and the value of education for children. Participatory, quality learning materials have been developed and textbooks and supplies are available in schools.

Teachers: Networks of support to teachers are well developed, which include training and on-going monitoring. As salaries are paid, supporting agencies can ensure accountability of teachers.

Community attitudes towards education: In recent history, many Afghans have been hostile towards education, associating it with the communist regime. However, over the last few years there has been a marked change in attitude , and in many communities there is now a demand for education which is not being met, There is now a greater awareness of what education **can** be, as many people have experienced quality, relevant programs

For some time the assistance community has believed that many Afghans are reluctant to allow female education and much efforts is expended on 'awareness raising' regarding the value of education. Whilst this is still true for some families, many more are now requesting girls' education, and we have been slow to respond to the new demand.

I have a concern over the use of the term "community" , particularly the Afghan context. Those who speak for the community are traditionally older men - the voices of other members are not usually heard. It is also difficult to access those voices, because of the tradition of purdah. However, whenever women and children are consulted, the majority are outspoken in their desire for education - a more representative sample of 'the community's view' would probably find an even greater demand for educational opportunities.

The following section highlights some of the key policy in the refugee context I have presented them in a somewhat polemic manner, with the aim of provoking debate. The statements and question do not represent the official view of any agency.

KEY ISSUES IN THE REFUGEE CONTEXT

- REFUGEE CONTEXT AS OPPORTUNITY: Among the refugee populations in Pakistan there is great scope to achieve in several important areas: increasing acceptance of, and participation in, education by rural populations; improving the quality of education; and particularly in addressing gender inequity. We can create 'facts on the ground' - girls going to school, women attending NFE can be seen as normal and valuable activities; education can be experienced as relevant and interesting. This in turn will raise awareness of the value of education, and raise expectations. Will returnees then be a force demanding education within Afghanistan?

- DECLINING FUNDING- INCREASING DEMAND: Most donors and agencies are now focusing on Afghanistan, but major attitudinal change among refugees means demand is outstripping supply, especially for girls. It is now lack of provision, not cultural proscriptions, that is the biggest barrier to female refugee participation in education. Should the trend of declining funding for refugees be halted in order to reap the benefits of the years of effort that contributed to making refugee education valuable and acceptable now?

Education for Afghans: Issues Confronting the Assistance Community

Draft minutes from the meeting
held in Islamabad, 30 April 1998

SUMMARY

On 30 April 1998, Save the Children (US) and UNICEF-Afghanistan, supported by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, organized a one-day workshop in Islamabad to examine the issue of education for Afghans. The workshop was attended by 40 representatives of the major assistance agencies involved in the education sector. The meeting aimed to identify the key issues in education; to clarify the objectives of international assistance to the education sector; to identify measures to strengthen the assistance efforts.

Education is considered a major requirement for the social and economic development of Afghanistan. The history of education in Afghanistan shows that, rather than building bridges, the introduction of a modern, secular education system besides the traditional, religious system caused a split in Afghan society. Large-scale government efforts had little impact, so that throughout the 20th century the bulk of the Afghan population remained illiterate.

International assistance to the education system has been fragmented. The assistance community has been unclear about its role in the face of the absence of a functioning governmental system, a lack of inputs and adversity regarding girls' education. Yet, the growing demand for education and the presence of a large refugee population outside Afghanistan present opportunities for a thorough re-appraisal of the aid community's policies and approaches.

The meeting identified the following core objectives for international assistance to the education sector:

1. To increase access to education opportunities;
2. To improve the quality and relevance of education programmes.
3. To strengthen the capacity implement, maintain and develop educational systems and structures.

The constraints identified centred around the lack of a common long-term vision of the international aid community and the lack of common policies, compounded by changing donor priorities. However, it was recognised that the growing demand for education and the availability of a functioning but under-resourced government structure form the basis for a constructive input into education services. The Pakistan refugee context and the situation in non-Taliban areas provide further opportunities to experiment and generate demand for education.

As a matter of priority, the international aid community should resolve the outstanding questions regarding its longer-term vision for assistance to Afghan education. Long-term commitment, coordination and the building of capacity are conditions for meaningful support to this sector, which at present is at a cross-roads.

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- FUNDING PROCEDURES DICTATE EDUCATION POLICY: Most money available for Afghans is from relief budgets, yet education needs longer term investment - multi-year funding. Also small scale self help projects, such as the private schools in the cities, can not easily access small amounts of money which could have a significant impact on access and quality. Can funding mechanisms be made more flexible and able to respond to opportunity in changeable environments such as the Afghan refugee context?

- EMPHASIS ON BASIC EDUCATION: Should we follow Education for All guidelines to the exclusion of secondary and tertiary? Is basic education going to be enough to help Afghanistan rehabilitate and develop? Where will the doctors, teachers, engineers come from? What about supporting the private sector in cities - the 'self-help' schools?

- GENDER EQUITY AND GENDER GAP: Although it is now more acceptable for girls to attend school, there are few female teachers and facilitators, few literate women to act as role models. Men dominate among teaching staff, head teachers, and even among NGO supervisory and programme staff. How can we bridge the gender gap?

- Relevance of SUSTAINABILITY: Should we expect refugee education to become sustainable? In many countries where it is free, including Afghanistan, education is considered a service, like health and water supply, and is funded from government sources. Do the refugees have the economic base to pay for it? Will they prioritize it over competing needs? What about other types of sustainability besides financial - behavioural, attitudinal?

- TRANSFERABILITY TO AFGHANISTAN: To what extent are experience and lessons from the refugee context valuable and applicable for Afghanistan? How can they be transferred or adapted? Can they serve as models to be scaled up in Afghanistan? Can we institutionalize concepts of accountability and professionalism, and quality methods and content on a scale significant enough to change the culture of the teaching profession within the refugee context, and thereby influence the formal sector in Afghanistan when these teachers repatriate?

- GOAL OF REPATRIATION: Will the provision of quality education discourage people from returning home, particularly to Taliban areas? Should we encourage people to return to areas where their girls will not have access to education?

Characteristically, there has been a two-handed approach. The first involves negotiations in accordance with the Principle-Centered Approach. And the second line of strategy involves lending support to the community-driven process.

I.A. NEGOTIATIONS AND THE PRINCIPLE-CENTERED APPROACH

All agencies in the Kabul Coordination Group agree with the principle that education is for both sexes and will not support anything less. In the firm belief that the agencies cannot support the formal sector until the inclusion of girls in accordance with the principle-centered approach, there was the attempt to negotiate the way forward with the Ministries. Within the Coordination Group, is a division of responsibilities between those NGOs that are operational on the ground, and those who are more able to bring up the issues to the discussion table with the different Ministries. Hence the division into the NGOs involved in activity vs. those doing advocacy. The strategy of negotiating a way forward has difficult to implement and remain a very delicate area. We are pushing the authorities to allow girls to return to school. Negotiations on the group level have ground to a halt. Issues that must be considered are that:

- ➢ The decision will be made elsewhere than Kabul.
- ➢ For agencies based in Kabul, it is difficult to ascertain the situation on the ground. NCA are currently at the forefront of the discussion it is useful for all agencies involved in education in Afghanistan to know what is on the table in the discussions.
- ➢ Agencies active in Education on the ground have little bargaining power. There is there is very much the impression that as a group chipping away at the block. Until that situation changes the Group as a whole are loath to bring discussions to the table.

- While the agencies involved in education in Kabul are not able to collectively see progress, there is reliance on advocates from abroad. All of our agencies rely on high-level negotiations.
- There is willingness to take up discussions again in the future.

- In the interim and until a principle centered approach can be implemented, there should be:
- ➢ Investment in planning terms.
- Talking Education: Getting Afghans together to plan an approach such that the expertise among them is not lost.. By taking this approach, the knowledge and expertise among Afghan staff previously involved in education programs will not be lost.
- Financial investment, 'money in the bank' such that agencies are able to move quickly once negotiations are achieved with the Taleban. These investments by Donors would also act as an incentive for the Taleban authorities to allow girls back into schools.

I.B SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROCESS

The community-driven response to the education situation in Kabul is an indigenous response to an acute problem. Local communities have begun an innovative, indigenous and stopgap response to the education emergency.

When considering support to the informal education sector, international agencies find themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand they are confronted with community initiatives that have been able to come to being without outside support and might even be harmed by receiving and attracting attention. On the other hand agencies recognize that schools could greatly benefit from relatively small contributions that are relatively easy to provide.

Moreover, the agencies concerned would like to use the influence they have to put an end to the clandestine nature of the schools and encourage some form of community recognition.

Therefore in lending support to the community-based initiative a low-profile approach is taken. The authorities already know of our activity with community-based school and of those schools allowing entry for girls, but has taken no action against these activities. We assume their (or some of their) acceptance of such activities.

- **Coordination**
  - ➢ First, the Education Coordination stresses the need to actively promote consistency. The agencies in Kabul firmly belief in taking a unified approach and coordination of all activities to provide support equally and fairly.
  - ➢ Second, by being a unified group (NGOs, UN and Communities) we will show the authorities that there is a deep desire from every-one to see education for all. All support is provided in a gender non-discriminatory way.
  - ➢ Third, it is recognized that a consensus can be reached through continual dialogue and negotiation. The creation of controversy among ourselves and of our own creation does not help us stand firm and united in our negotiations with the Taleban. Furthermore, the authorities know how to take advantage of us when we are split and lack consensus.
  - ➢ Finally, a phased approach has also been adopted. As agencies implement the strategies, there is a continual reassessment as the agencies stop and 'take stock' of the situation.

- **Confirmation of Existing Data**
  - ➢ The Kabul Coordination Group is aware of the fact that many of the statistics in circulation regarding the situation of formal education in Kabul are unsubstantiated. The Education Coordination Group has followed up these issues with the Ministry of Education and reliable sources.
  - In July 1997, there were according to Min of Education estimates 14,000 teachers in Kabul. This figure includes male and female staff.
  - At that time there were approximately 150,000 boys in school.

- **Collection of Base-line information**
  - The situation of these home-schools regarding their numbers is being monitored on a Database containing the following information. This database started with an initial survey developed by all the agencies involved in the Kabul Education Group in December 1997. It aimed to gain better insight into the scope and scale of informal education in Kabul. This can be used to better plan supporting activities, to serve as a basis for more in depth research or as information that can be used (with prudence) to put pressure on the government to accept the existing situation.
  - At all times implementation is based on the available data on the database and the Education Co-ordination Group has made coordination with one another a priority in the belief that this may make the provision of support to the communities
  - This database is continually verified and up-dated by Field Officers working in the field and continually up-dated by the NGOs working in the field of informal education. It is increasingly apparent that these initiatives are a real community-driven process.

- **Development of a Joint Strategy**
  - On the basis of the immense needs and limited response, the Education Coordination Group has decided that all assistance to the home-schools must fine-tuned and kept to a minimum. While all agencies in the Education Co-ordination Group have agreed not support any form of formal education until the situation changes, there is a definite interest amongst these agencies to support the local initiatives.
  - As communities have started to organize their own schools, there has been the provision of limited support. Here a few strategic needs are identifies and the agencies response has been to fine-tune support and lend support to the community-driven process. This is not an attempt to create a parallel to the formal system. Here concrete decisions taken include the:

- **Setting of criteria for support to community-based schools the following are criteria we came up with. These criteria are not written in stone.**
  - Class Size. A community-based school should consist of at least 10 students. One teacher and his or her seven children does not constitute a community-based school and was not defined at this time due to the logistical constraints some of the community-based schools experience. However, the importance of a small teacher student ratio will be emphasized to the teachers in future teacher training and the logistics of the schools will be improved to decrease those ratios.
  - Curriculum. It was agreed that for a school to receive support it might teach the Koran but not only the Koran but not only the Koran. A balanced education is what is desired. A school in the Mosque that teaches only the Koran is not what we want to support.
  - Sex. Both sexes must be taught and taught the same criteria. If a school is a girl's only school then this criteria can be overlooked.

- Sex of the teacher. The sex of the teacher was not considered relevant as long a both sexes are taught.
- Teacher Qualifications. All teachers in a community-based school should have at least a high school education and there should be at least one that has an advanced degree or teacher-training certificate.
- Qualifications. The school should have a four-hour teaching day planned. It is a given that we cannot demand that every child attend school for the whole four hours due to each individual situation. There should be a four-hour plan during spring, summer and fall; a three-hour plan during the winter months and two during Ramadan.
- Quality. At this point in the support to the community based schools a standard of quality cannot be set. Once programs by various NGOs are ongoing and teacher training has started a standard can be established at that time.

- **Establishment of Minimum levels of Support**
  - It was concluded that no agency be extravagant in their support to community based schools.
  - The level of support should be basically material input provisions (stationary, texts, etc), low cost rehabilitation (fix the roof, a toilet or a window etc.) and teacher training
  - UNICEF are providing MedAir with school kit for distribution in the community based schools providing there is equal access to all
  - Focus should be on not creating dependency on the international organizations

- **Informal Support Networks**
  - **It was agreed that a few of the community-based schools in Kabul have a network for liaison between themselves, when teacher training begins this network will be strengthened and improved.**

- **Improving Access By Encouraging Female Teachers Not Currently Working To Start New Community Based Schools**
  - **This is not considered a good idea at this time. Some agencies have had bad experiences when people are under the assumption that they will receive an increase in their personal worth through the help of international agencies**

- **Quality Improvements**
  - **In-service teacher training will be the model for quality improvements in teaching given the need to maintain a low profile.**

- **Creation of Small-scale Economic Opportunities**
  - **It is felt that at this time small scale economic opportunities can not be created in a cost-effective manner. However, when formal education does start for all, this idea can be pursued.**

- **Establishment of Monitoring Mechanisms**
  - **Monitoring will be a key feature of all programs in Kabul**
  - **Direct monitoring by expatriate staff will be difficult given the need to maintain a low profile.**

I.C. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Agencies are aware of the sensibilities in the promotion of Education programs in Kabul. Therefore we aim to keep the implementation strategies as low profile as possible. This

means that the more quiet the activity and the less said the better. As implementation moves forward and other agencies program activities in Kabul, the Education Coordination Group stresses the need for the low profile.

In so far as implementation strategy is concerned we seek to avoid rather than overcome risks. It is true that agency interference can backfire on the schools, teachers, students and agencies themselves. All forms of support, intervention and negotiation should be done care-fully and thoughtfully. On the one hand it should not be forgotten that both the potential and the resolve to educate their own children is high among the citizens of Kabul. Even if the government would crack down on informal education activities they would resurface again. Therefore, prudence should not result in inactivity.

Highlights of the
Debriefing by the Education Policy Consultant

Islamabad, 21 May 1998

The aim of this meeting, which took place at the UNICEF offices in Islamabad, was to provide the opportunity to Dr. Andrea Rugh, Education Policy Consultant to Save the Children US, to present her preliminary conclusions to a range of actors active in providing education to Afghans.

As such, it was a direct outcome of the meeting on "Education for Afghans: Issues Confronting the Assistance Community", held in Islamabad on 30 April 1998.

I. Presentation by Dr. Andrea Rugh

Dr. Rugh's presentation included the following comments:

1. Purpose of the consultancy

Overall purpose: to assess current international assistance to the education sector and suggest strategies for maximizing the impact in terms of access and quality, by identifying:

- key issues in the provision of education services,
- capacities in the assistance community, and
- appropriate strategies to maximize the impact in education.

To this end, the consultant engaged in a review of project documents; meetings with representatives of international and local assistance agencies, donors and education authorities; and visits to schools and projects in Kunar province, Kabul city, Jalalabad and Peshawar.

2. Issues

The consultant identified three categories of issues confronting the assistance community:

- contextual - those conditions of the Afghan situation which provide opportunities and challenges and determine the limits of what can be done
- operational - those policy questions and funding constraints that affect the ability of assistance agencies to carry out initiatives
- technical - those capacities and approaches within the assistance community required to realize an effective and efficient education program

She recommended that more systemic approaches to the provision of education services are needed, as well as more effective, flexible delivery methods and models that can serve the needs of both urban and rural children, whether in Afghanistan or refugees in Pakistan. This requires strengthened capacity within the development community and strengthened capacity within local education structures and NGO agencies. To this end, she focused her study on the objectives identified by aid agencies themselves, during a meeting organized by SC-US and UNICEF on 30 April in Islamabad:

- <u>access</u> to education opportunities,
- <u>quality</u> and relevance of programs, and
- <u>capacities</u> to develop, implement and maintain education systems and structures.

3. Strategies to improve access
The strategies identified by the consultant include:

1) **"packaged" programs**; Programs including the full range of essential components: materials, training, supervision, and assessment. Such programs are easily transported and managed at a distance, and allow for more rapid response to local demand and conditions.
2) low-cost **supplementary materials** that fill gaps in education services. These materials are for children of varying ages and backgrounds, such as instructional boxes of graded cardboard reading cards or self-instruction aids.
3) flexible, **alternative delivery systems** that address various conditions of urban and rural communities, e.g. home-based initiatives, community-based initiatives, programs by local Afghan NGOs and other options, such as Interactive Radio, self-instruction, roving teachers and classes and mosque schools.
4) **"action" research** to determine the most cost-effective way to scale up education opportunities. The purpose of the "action research" would be to assess the quality and cost-effectiveness of different inputs, e.g. different materials; teacher training.

4. Strategies to improve program quality
The second objective mentioned by aid agencies was the enhancement of program quality. The problems in this area relate to ineffective teacher training, textbooks that are not designed with child learning in mind, and supervision systems that do not enhance teacher professionalism.

The strategies recommended to improve program quality are:

- Assessment of the quality of curriculum models.
- Improvement of supervision, focusing on learning outcomes.
- Assess the system through continuous tests of student learning.
- Develop the capacity to reflect and analyse among all education staff.
- Develop mechanisms to focus initiatives on student learning, improvements in teacher training, better teacher support and "model elaborations" of lessons and instructional aids.

5. Strategies to strengthen capacity within the assistance community
The aid community needs to strengthen its technical capacity, its delivery capacity and the involvement of Afghans themselves:

- **Technical capacity**. Developers of education inputs need to hire specialists with extensive experience.
- **Delivery capacity**. Agencies need to plan strategically for how to address demand for education more effectively.
- **Continuity and history**. Assistance agencies need to work more to document their experiences and exchange information and lessons learned.
- **Long and short term goals.** Agencies need to define short and long-term aims more explicitly, even when funding is not available for long-term goals.
- **Assessment capacity.** Assessment is an undeveloped capacity in the assistance community with important consequences. The objective of education---student learning, is largely ignored.
- **Continuous improvement.** Education programs and inputs must be continuously adjusted to meet new circumstances and needs.
- **Afghan involvement.** The assistance community needs to involve Afghans more at all stages of its programs, including planning.

The strengthening of capacity within local NGO agencies is particularly important. To this end, Afghan agencies need to demonstrate their management capacities and ensure proper coordination. The international agencies on their side need to clarify responsibilities of each partner and help NGOs to develop capacity for specialized implementation tasks.

Where possible, international assistance should also strengthen capacity within Afghan formal education structures, through providing resources and training.

6. Long and short term goals

The short-term aim of international assistance to education should be to develop and test efficient and effective education models suitable for a variety of Afghan contexts. This can be achieved by providing:

- simple packaged programs (from existing models)
- supplementary materials to fill gaps
- teacher support
- supervision that drives programs toward better learning
- alternative delivery systems: home-schools, community supported schooling, roving teachers, self-instruction, etc.
- strengthened local NGO capacity to implement programs
- strengthened capacity to support the development of models

In the long-term the international community should aim to deliver tested models efficiently and effectively to all children of Afghanistan.

7. Next steps

Dr. Rugh recommended a forum for the sharing of information, experiences and "lessons learned", as well as of skills, expertise and models. The consultant proposed a periodically held symposium retreat (e.g. 2 days twice a year) by an expert in a specialty of importance to the education community. The symposia would provide an opportunity to share the latest information on a particular aspect of education, specialist advice on relevant agencies' activities, as well as an opportunity for agencies to display "story boards" of their activities and products.

II. Discussion and conclusion

During the discussions, it became clear that many agencies are committed to taking the issues discussed at this meeting further. It was agreed that follow-up activities should also include representatives from the donor community.

It was recommended that more work should be done to identify existing models for the provision of education services and to encourage evaluation of those models. It was reaffirmed that the short-term aim is to make a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the different models of assistance to education. It was also stressed that the focus of international assistance should be on child learning achievements, not on the supply side. International agencies should strive to offer comprehensive packages of support. By pooling resources, they may be able to hire experts on specific technical issues, especially for the identification and formulation of new programs.

A discussion on the pros and cons of the UN's Common Programming and the Principles Approach was concluded by stressing that the principles were important and that the adherence to these principles does not necessarily block activities along the lines set out by Dr. Rugh. Her report outlines a range of technical issues that need addressing, as well as a number of ideas that can be integrated immediately into agency programs. At present, there are a number of opportunities to greatly improve the educational experience of Afghans that the international community cannot afford to miss.

Present:

NGOs:
Warren Buttery, ACBAR
Dr. Yusuf Nuristani, AG-BASEd
Nancy Dupree, ARIC/ACBAR
Abdul Razique Samadi, ADA
Fousia Zamni, AWEC
Shirazuddin Siddiqui, BBC AEP
Hasan Mohammed, CARE
Sarwar Hussaini, CCA
Sultan Mohammed Joyan, CDAP
Junaid Shah, GTZ-BEFARe
Eric van der Lee, IRC
Kara Johnston, IRC
Sayed Mosadiq, NATURE
Jan Ahlander, NCA
Thomas Hildebrand, Radda Barnen
Amir Ahamadi, SAB
Shon Campbell, SCF-UK
Andrew Wilder, SC-USA
Catherine Kennedy, SC-USA
Vicki Dean, SC-USA
Andrea Rugh, consultant/SC-USA
Nouria Karimi, S. Wali Khan school
Dr. Harry Jeene, Kabul Univ./ RALSA

United Nations:
Samantha Reynolds, UNCHS Habitat
Huda Seif, UNDP
Rosa Belen, UNESCO
Anjum R. Haque, UNESCO
Arju Mulhaq, UNESCO
Dr. Ekanayake, UNHCR/UNESCO
Dr. Saims Painde, UNHCR
Geert van de Casteele, UNHCR
Jim Mohan, UNICEF
Jan Scholten, UNICEF
Khalil Kakar, UNICEF
Ellen van Kalmthout, UNICEF
Dr. Mohammed Nazar, UNICEF
Musa Naheeb, UNICEF
Pippa Bradford, UNOPS

Donors:
Govert Visser, Royal Netherlands Embassy

1. Introduction

Jim Mohan, UNICEF Representative to Afghanistan, welcomed the participants and stressed that this meeting was the beginning of a process aimed at identifying the challenges for international assistance to education for Afghans.

Andrew Wilder, Field Office Director of Save the Children USA, indicated that the aim of this meeting was three-fold:

- to identify the key issues in education
- to clarify the objectives of international assistance to the education sector
- to identify measures to strengthen the assistance efforts.

The international aid community needs to apply a long-term perspective. Up until now, aid to Afghanistan has been based on one-year planning cycles. Now it is time to consider what impact this assistance has had and to clarify what the aid community is trying to achieve in the longer term. This meeting aims at improving international assistance by analysing the bigger picture.

Govert Visser, Second Secretary Development at the Royal Netherlands Embassy, explained that the Dutch government supported this process financially as the idea for the meeting stemmed from the visit of Minister Pronk to Afghanistan in February 1998.

2. History

Nancy Dupree, head of ARIC/ACBAR presented the historical patterns of education in Afghanistan (The text of her presentation is included in Annex): Afghan society accords great respect for learning. Relations between teacher and pupil often are long-lasting. Through the ages, communities have supported their own education systems (i.e. the mosques and madrasses), but the educational practices in these institutions leave much to be desired so that the bulk of the Afghan population remained illiterate.

Education became a state responsibility at the end of the 19th century, when Amir Rahman introduced secular education. The 20th century saw many attempts to introduce a modern education system, and many efforts at resistance. Not only did the creation of a secular system create a division in society (between those educated in traditional and those from modern schools) but it also was clearly linked to attempts to build support for the nationalist/royalist/secular view of society.

Throughout the 20th century, large-scale government efforts had little impact. The problems of the education sector in the 1990s are the same as they have been for the last 100 years: lack of dynamic and accountable policy-makers, gender gap, gaps between rural and urban areas, ineffective teaching methods, lack of teacher training and teaching materials, elite focus. As a result, education did not succeed in building a bridge between the old habits and the new reality of the 20th century.

While the period of Soviet occupation discredited formal state education, the 1990s show a clear and growing demand for education in Afghanistan. The education sector needs to try and fulfil the aspirations of the people.

3. Education in Afghanistan

Ellen van Kalmthout, Education Officer at UNICEF, gave an overview of the assistance to the education sector: While the education sector has been in crisis for a long time, it took the Taliban edict against girls' education to make this crisis visible to the outside world. Now that the crisis is being acknowledged, it may provide an opportunity for change.

Although most data on education in Afghanistan is unreliable, it seems fair to conclude that the situation now is comparable to that before the war. Less than a third of the country's 4.4 million children is in school. Yet there now are more different channels of education (traditional religious, government schools, urban private and community schools, externally supported schools) and there may be a convergence between the modern and the traditional system.

The scale of the international assistance is hard to determine, as data collective funding levels are not available. While total assistance to Afghanistan amounts to more than 200 million US$, the NGO education projects total only 12 million US$ (1996). Estimates indicate that international assistance reaches only 5% of all Afghan children in school-going age. Many organisations are involved in the assistance, but there is a clear concentration on the East of the country, and very few agencies have specialised in the provision of education. The bulk of international assistance is going to rural community-based basic education initiatives.

The environment for assistance is characterised by:

→ a lack of political will/funding (does this mean international assistance should take over the government role?).
→ a lack of national education policies (has contributed to the fragmentation of international assistance).

→ a lack of government capacity.
→ restrictions on girls' education (what level of policy coherence is needed in response?)
→ a lack of input from global developments in education.

However, the crisis stemming from low access and poor quality at all levels and a ban on girls' education provides an opportunity for a rethinking of the objectives and policies of the international assistance.

4. Refugee education

Catherine Kennedy, Education Coordinator of Save the Children USA, described issues surrounding the assistance to the Afghan refugees, which is one of the biggest refugee populations in the world. Although Pakistan is not a signatory to the Geneva Conventions regarding refugees, it has generously accepted large numbers of refugees. At present, there are an estimated 1.2 million refugees in Pakistan. The UNHCR assists those refugees registered and settled in camps, providing access to education to about 30% of primary school-aged children. There are no clear statistics about international assistance to refugee madrasses, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. There is very little support to 'self-help' schools set up by educated Afghans in the cities of Pakistan.

In many ways, it is artificial to distinguish between assistance to Afghans in Afghanistan and to those in Pakistan, as the refugee population is not static and because there are many similarities between the situation on both sides of the border: low literacy levels, a gender gap in access and participation, low levels of provision, external assistance often plays the role of government assistance, and most importantly: demand for education outstrips supply.

The traditionally hostile attitudes to education have changed recently, and demand (especially for girls' education) is growing rapidly. Thus, there is a clear opportunity for the international community to achieve growth in access. However, funding levels for the refugees are falling just as demand is growing. Furthermore, donor funding procedures put serious constraints on long-term commitments.

There are a number of key issues with regard to education in the refugee context::

- There is great scope to achieve quality education among the refugee populations in Pakistan. The experiences of education in refugee camps regarding e.g. non-formal education or girls' education can create examples for models to be used inside Afghanistan.
- In recent years, demand for education among Afghans has grown tremendously. At present, it is a lack of provision, not cultural proscriptions that form the biggest barrier to female participation in education. At the same time, there is a trend of declining funds for education.
- Most funding for Afghanistan is from relief budgets, yet education needs longer-term funding pledges.
- An emphasis on basic education will be to the detriment of secondary and tertiary education.
- Although it is now more acceptable for girls to attend school, there are few female teachers and literate women who can serve as role models. The gender gap needs to be bridged.

5. Objectives of external assistance

Participants divided into small groups to discuss the objectives of their agencies' programmes and to distil a set of core objectives for assistance to the education sector. From the discussions it became clear that education is a clearly expressed need of the people of Afghanistan, but that the international community is not clear about how it can best fulfil this need.

It was felt that it was important to take advantage of current opportunities to increase access, quality, retention levels and equity in education, mainly through the support of community initiatives. At the same time, it was clearly expressed that there is a need to communicate the needs and constraints of the education sector to the donor community.

The core objectives for support to Afghan education (both in Pakistan and Afghanistan) that could be distilled from the morning's discussion were:
1. To increase access to education opportunities;
2. To improve the quality and relevance of education programmes.
3. To strengthen the capacity to develop, implement and maintain the educational systems and structures.

6. Programme priorities

During the afternoon, participants discussed ways to translate these objectives into common programme priorities. While it was clear that education opportunities need to be open to all groups of people, there was no clear consensus as to what channels were most appropriate in view of the constraints and opportunities of the education sector.

Among the constraints identified were:
- The lack of flexibility in operational practice of the international aid community;
- The lack of common policies among agencies: donors and implementors (regarding the proper role of international assistance in the face of the absence of functioning government structures, as well as relating to the best reaction to the Taliban ban on girls' education);
- The lack of a common long-term strategic vision (and principles) relating to education, from which a set of common policies could be distilled;
- The volatile security situation;
- The lack of implementing capacity and educational expertise;
- The unpredictability of donor funding and policies;
- Cultural attitudes to (girls') education;
- The policies of the Government of Pakistan.

However, it was recognised that at present, there are a range of unprecedented opportunities to build up an effective set of educational services:
- There is an increasing demand for education, especially for girls and women;
- The Pakistani refugee context has provided the aid agencies with the chance to develop material and teaching aids, as well as with the opportunity to build up working models of female education, thus triggering greater demand for quality education;
- Afghans returning from Pakistan and Iran have proved willing to invest in education initiative inside Afghanistan;
- In many parts of Afghanistan, there are functioning but under-resourced government structures.

As a result, the aid community should:
1. Evaluate the impact of different kinds of inputs (e.g. teacher training, provision of materials, etc.) and plan to maximize efforts by larger-scale investment in successful initiatives.
2. Invest time and energy in the development of a common long-term strategic vision for assistance to Afghanistan, in particular to the education sector;
3. Build up capacity to implement and maintain educational services;
4. Aim to diversify its assistance, by supporting different channels of educational services: e.g. formal education, non-formal education, distance learning, small-scale community initiatives.
5. Make a long-term commitment to its support to education.

For this, it is necessary that the aid community resolves a number of issues, in particular the clarification of the division of responsibility for the provision of education.
Furthermore, there is no consensus regarding:

- the appropriate reaction to a ban on girls' education: withdraw altogether, educate boys only, or support other non-formal structures?
- whether or not to provide teacher salaries/incentives.
- whether support should focus exclusively on basic education, or if secondary and tertiary education should also be supported.

7. Next steps

This workshop aimed to initiate a process of reflection among the aid agencies regarding objectives and strategies for support. The meeting clearly identified the need to discuss the elements of a common aid vision further. In the absence of a functioning governmental system, it falls on the aid community to maintain an educational system, with support from the Afghan population.

The meeting made clear that Afghans themselves are asking for educational services, and are willing to contribute to them. Assistance to education should respond to these expectations and contributions. Now it is up to the aid community to identify the different models, and to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of each of them. Objectives need to be formulated in measurable ways, and the benchmark of activities should be student learning.

The following concrete steps were agreed:

1. The consultant hired by SC-US and UNICEF will identify policies, capacities and priorities among the aid agencies and report back before 21 May.
   In order for the consultant to be able to do this, all agencies should send an overview of their projects and proposals to SC-US (for Islamabad-based agencies), UNICEF (for Peshawar) and ACBAR (for Kabul) before 5 May 1998.
2. A core group should be formed which can carry the process further. Further meetings should be planned and sub-groups should be formed on specific technical issues. The aim should be the development of shared principles, and shared plans.
   The core group should be selected at the consultant's feed-back meeting in May.
3. From this, an inventory of assistance models can be distilled. Each of these models should be evaluated. The subgroups can focus on: teacher training, non-formal education, the question of how to rapidly increase scale, etc.
4. The focus of this process should be practical. The issue should be: how to change the operational context / the way donors and implementors operate?
5. In order to be inclusive, the process should involve meetings in different locations.
6. In order to improve the reliability of data, a common format for reporting about on-going education activities needs to be developed.
7. Youth organisations should continue to be invited to future meetings.

May 1998

AFGHANISTAN:
HISTORICAL PATTERNS IN EDUCATION

Nancy Hatch Dupree
23 April 1998

It is humbling for a non-professional to be asked to address such a gallery of professionals. I am indeed honoured by your invitation. Over the past few years it has been my happy lot to have observed your considerable efforts in the field of education, a sector which you yourselves have rightly characterized as underpinning all development prospects. In addition, during the years I lived in Kabul, and in villages near Louis' archeological digs, I was also privileged to observe many aspects of the society, including what was going on in education. Perhaps therefore I can contribute something in the way of a useful perspective.

Selecting from a plethora of material only what I believe is relevant to the situation today, I focus on major actors, emphasizing their motives for introducing educational reforms and highlighting those patterns which persist.

WAY BACK

At the outset, it should be kept in mind that education has always been a desired ideal in this region where renowned centres of learning flourished during different historical periods. In addition, since seeking knowledge is sanctified by the Islamic injunction that all good Muslims, including women, should seek education so as to better provide social justice for the community, all knowledgeable individuals, not only scholars, are accorded measurable respect. Thus one finds that bonds between teachers and pupils are strong and enduring, second only to those governing the rights and obligations of families.

In practice, however, the ideal was confined largely to elites, flourishing at the Islamic courts of the Samanids in Balkh in the 9th century, the Ghaznavids in Ghazni during the 10th and 11th centuries, the Timurids in Herat in the 15th and in Kandahar in the 18th century. Women are included in the roster of stellar literary lights from all these periods. Among them one can mention the indomitable Gawhar Shad whose madrassa in Herat was renowned far and wide in Timurid times. And Zainab, the granddaughter of the 18th century nationalist Mir Wais, is still celebrated for her efforts in promoting education in the haremserais of Kandahar.

This high tradition of scholarship provided the form for traditional learning by the 19th century, although much of the creativity of the earlier times had been lost. It was focussed on the transmission of Islamic doctrine through the institutional structure and organization of madrassas centered around reputed scholar/tutors with their devoted disciples. These centres of learning were private concerns attached to mosques and supported by communities as well as rich patrons. There was no uniformity in curriculum. Studies included all aspects of Islam, as well as theology, jurisprudence, logic, Persian classical literature, and natural sciences focussed on Greek medicine. Teaching methods relied heavily on recitation and memory.

The lower levels of educational establishments were also found in community-supported mosques in villages, district towns and city neighborhoods. Here instruction, again with no uniform curriculum, dwelt almost exclusively on imparting knowledge of the beliefs, practices and moral teachings of Islam taught by the rote reading of the Koran and other popular literary devices utilizing classical Persian poetry and prose with a goodly admixture of customary tribal beliefs as well. Two primary popular texts, *Panj Ganj*, and, *Kulliyat-i Chahar Kitab*, expound on the duties of good Muslims, correct behavior, and other types of religious knowledge. Unfortunately numerous superstitions and prejudices also appear. Attitudes concerning female foibles and male superiority are entrenched at a very early age through these texts.

The local mosque schools were too often taught by mullahs with minimal education; sometimes they were barely literate. They relied on recitation, memorization and endless repetition. Comprehension was of little relevance and a favoured teaching aid was a long stick used to jar the inattentive unlucky enough to err.

Although respect for learning continued as the end of the 19th century approached, the bulk of the population remained illiterate. Learning to read the Koran by rote did not necessarily mean learning to write.

REFORMS BEGIN AND END: 1880s-1929

Although Amir Sher Ali opened what might be called the first modern schools as early as 1868, the absence of educated subjects irritated the creator of the first centralized nation-state in Afghanistan. Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) is decisive in his observations and advice.

The Amir relates that on coming to the throne in 1880 he sought 30 clerks who could read and write but could find only three. As a result he made education a major pillar of his reforms. He opened schools in major towns and required every official to take an examination before being appointed. He also had the foresight to order the printing of thousands of books for the continuing edification of students. Would that present aid providers could follow this lead.

Thus education served to strengthen the Amir's administration, but his vision went far beyond this. His ultimate goal was to establish a centralized, integrated autocratic nation-state and to extend his authority over all aspects of society so as to make sure Afghanistan would become a respected nation within the comity of nations. Educated subjects, including women, he said were imperative. In advocating education for women, however, he was equally adamant in insisting on their seclusion and obviously saw nothing inconsistent in this. For instance, he says:

> Owing to the wisdom of our Holy Prophet, who commanded that women under no circumstances should ever leave their houses without the consent and permission of their husbands, women should be allowed to do so for one purpose only, that of being educated.

The Amir also devoted much of his efforts to reorganizing a state-supervised religious hierarchy which effectively lessened their heretofore domination of education. Mullahs were not permitted to perform their duties without first passing examinations set by the State. High

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U.S.A. HEADQUARTERS
54 Wilton Road
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DATE: 11 June 1998

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION LIST

FROM: Andrew Wilder

RE: Education for Afghans: Issues confronting the assistance community

On 30 April, Save the Children USA and UNICEF organised a workshop in Islamabad on "Education for Afghans: Issues-Confronting the Assistance Community".

The workshop was a starting point for a process of reflection and analysis regarding the international assistance to the education sector. An Education Policy Consultant hired by Save the Children then conducted research on the issues identified. A direct outcome of this process was a meeting held in Islamabad on 21 May, where she presented her preliminary conclusions.

We feel that the workshop and the consultancy were a positive step towards better assistance to the Afghan people. The growing demand for education both inside Afghanistan and among the refugees in Pakistan presents us with an opportunity to improve the educational experience of the Afghan people. It is our common responsibility to respond to that demand in an effective and efficient way.

The consultant's report outlines a number of practical suggestions on how the various agencies can improve their technical capabilities. Also, we have attached a paper prepared by the ACBAR Kabul education sub-committee on the issues confronting the assistance community in the Kabul context. We trust you will find these contributions useful. We would also hope to receive your suggestions on how to take the process further.

Please find attached the key documents from this process. We ask you to share these documents with your relevant colleagues:

- The minutes of the meeting on 30 April;
- The presentation on historical patterns in education (Nancy Dupree);
- The presentation on the current situation in education (Ellen van Kalmthout);
- The presentation on the key issues in the refugee context (Catherine Kennedy);
- A summary of the debriefing meeting on 21 May;
- The paper from the ACBAR Kabul education sub-committee.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Wilder
Field Office Director